

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

PROPERTIES AND EFFECTS

OF

C O F F E E.

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OBSERVATIONS, &c.

IT is a generally received opinion, that the human frame is not less influenced by diet than by climate; that its dispositions and characteristics, owe their originality as much to food, as those diseases evidently do, which are the legitimate and indisputable issue of it.

If the preceding position be just, there cannot surely be a subject more

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interesting to man, than the pursuit of that knowledge, which may instruct him to select for his use, such things as tend to raise the value of his condition, and to carry the enjoyments of life to their utmost improvement.

With this idea, I venture to submit to the Public some Observations which occurred to me, during a residence of many years in the West-Indies, on the dietetic and medicinal properties and effects of Coffee.

In England, the use of this berry hitherto has been principally confined
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to the occasional luxury of individuals; as such it is scarcely an object of public concern; but Government wisely considering, that this produce of our own West-India Islands is raised by our Fellow-subjects, and paid for in our Manufactures, has lately reduced the Duty on the Importation of Plantation Coffee; which has brought it within the reach of every description of people; and as it is not liable to any pernicious process in curing it, and is incapable of adulteration, the use of it will probably become greatly extended; — as in other countries, it may diffuse itself among the mass of the people, and
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make a considerable ingredient in their daily sustenance.

The botanical description of the *Coffee Plant* has been already given by several writers*; and as an accurate account of it was collected and published in 1774 by Mr. Ellis, it is unnecessary here to say any thing on this part of the subject, or to treat of its cultivation: but I thought it might not be improper in this Essay, to include something of its history, which will shew it to be no less remarkable for the universality with which it has

* *Alpinus, Ray, Sloane, Linnæus, Jussieu, &c.*

been

been adopted by many regions of the East, than for the permanency with which it has been retained; notwithstanding the caprice of Taste, the violence of Laws, and the austerity of Religion.

Coffee, though a native of *Arabia Felix*, had been converted into use in Africa and Persia, long before a beverage was made of it by the Arabians.*

About the middle of the fifteenth century, the *Mufti* of Aden, a city in Arabia

* Arabian Manuscript in the King of France's Library. No. 944.

Arabia Felix, travelling into Persia, learnt the use of it there, and on his return, introduced it to his countrymen.

It is from this period, that any authentic account of the dietetic use of Coffee is derived; though conjecture has traced its virtues back to the remotest ages; and supposes it the *Nepenthe*, the “ φάρμακον, κακῶν ἐπίληθον αἰπάνων,”* which *Helen* received from an Egyptian Lady, and is celebrated by Homer, as a soother of the mind,

* Odyss. Δ.

mind, in the extremest state of anger, grief, and misfortune.

From Aden it spread its influence through all Arabia, and other parts of the Ottoman Empire, and arrived at Constantinople in the reign of Solyman the Great in the year 1554; and about a century afterwards, it was adopted at London and Paris.

The virtues of this chearful liquor, like moral virtues under despotism, operated in Constantinople to its detriment; it introduced a disposition to exercise the understanding;—a crime in every government that

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tolerates nothing but silent obedience.

However strange it may appear at this time, Coffee had similar difficulties to encounter on its introduction into England; for it experienced the same treatment under *Charles the Second* that it met with in Turkey under an *Amureth* and a *Mahomet*: it having been found an encourager of social meetings, Coffee-houses were shut up by proclamation, as seminaries of sedition.*

* Anno 1675.

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It was long after Coffee had been an article of Commerce, that Europeans were able to obtain, or cultivate the plant, as the berry was exported dry, and unfit for propagation.

Ray observed, that the part of Arabia which produced Coffee, might truly be stiled happy; from whence many millions of bushels of this valuable treasure were annually exported to Turkey, Barbary, and Europe.— In Constantinople alone, the consumption is said to amount to more than what is expended for wine in Paris.

According to *Boerhave's* account, a Dutch Governor was the first person who procured fresh berries from Mocha, and planted them in *Batavia*; and in the year 1690 sent a plant from thence, to Amsterdam; which came to maturity, and produced those berries, which have since furnished all that is now cultivated in the West-Indies.

Some writers mention several sorts of Coffee; but the difference arises only from the soil, cultivation, and curing; and not from any difference in the species.

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In 1714 a Plant, from the garden of Amsterdam, was sent by the Magistrates, as a present to Lewis the XIVth, which was placed in the garden at Marli.

In 1718 the Dutch began to cultivate Coffee in Surinam; in 1727 the French began to cultivate it in Martinico; and in 1728 the English began to cultivate it in Jamaica.

The first plant in Jamaica, was introduced by Sir Nicholas Laws, and planted at Townwell Estate, now called Temple Hall, belonging to
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Mr. Luttrell.—How it has been propagated since those periods, in the West-Indies, and the employment it has given to the industry of people of small capital, a numerous and necessary body of men, to the increase of the Commerce, and population of the Colonies, is too well known to require recital here.

The chemical analysis of Coffee, evinces that it possesses a great portion of mildly bitter, and lightly astringent gummous and resinous extract;* a

* *Newman* obtained eight ounces from sixteen ounces of roasted Coffee, by aqueous and spirituous menstruums.

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considerable quantity of oil;* a fixed salt;† and a volatile salt.‡—These are its medicinal constituent principles.

The intention of torrefaction, is not only to make it deliver those principles and make them soluble in water, but to give it a property it does not possess in the natural state of the berry.

* *Bourdelin* obtained six ounces six drams, from two pounds and a half of roasted Coffee: and *Houghton*, *Phil. Transf.* obtained two ounces four drams two scruples, from one pound of unroasted Coffee.

† *Le Fevre. Newman. Bourdelin*, obtained nine drams and a half, from two pounds and a half of roasted Coffee.

‡ *Bourdelin* obtained a volatile salt, that effervesced strongly with spirit of salt.

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By the action of fire, its leguminous taste is destroyed; its mucilage is changed; its salts are disengaged, and its oil is rendered empyreumatic.—From thence arises the pungent smell, and exhilarating flavour, not found in its natural state.

Animal oils are changed by fire in the same manner in broiled meats, and acquire that grateful odour, so exciting to weak appetites.

Imitations of Coffee have been procured from roasted beans, peas, wheat, and rye with almonds; but the delicacy of the oil in Coffee, which

which the fire in roasting, converts into its peculiar empyreuna, is not to be equalled.

The roasting of the berry to a proper degree requires great nicety ; if it is under-done, its virtues will not be imparted ; if it is over-done, it will yield a flat, burnt, and bitter taste; and its virtues will be destroyed. The closer it is confined at the time of roasting, and till used, the better will its pungency and flavour be preserved.

The extraordinary influence which Coffee, judiciously prepared, imparts

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to the stomach, from its tonic and invigorating qualities, is strongly exemplified by the immediate effect produced on taking it, when the stomach is overloaded with food, or nauseated with surfeit, or debilitated by intemperance.

To constitutionally weak stomachs, it affords a pleasing sensation ; it accelerates the process of digestion,*

* What the process of digestion in the body is, we do not clearly understand ; but we are certain that artificial digestion, made out of the body, without the assistance of gastric fluid, can bear no affinity to it.—Who would not conclude from the disagreement of Coffee mixed with wine in a glass, that disagreeable effects would arise from mixing them in the stomach ?—Experience proves the contrary of this.

corrects crudities, and removes flatulencies.

Besides its effects in keeping up the harmony of the gastric powers, it diffuses a genial warmth that cherishes the animal spirits, and takes away the listlessness and languor,* which so greatly imbitter the hours of nervous people, after any deviation to excess, fatigue, or irregularity.

The foundation of all the mischiefs of intemperance is laid in the stomach;

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* *Baglivi.*

for when that is injured, instead of preparing the food, that the lacteals may carry into the constitution, sweet and wholesome juices to the support of health, it becomes the source of disease, and disperses through the whole frame the cause of decay.

From the efficacy of Coffee in attenuating the viscid fluids, and increasing the vigour of the circulation, it has been used with great success in the dropsy:—and in those comatose torpid, anasarca's diseases, that arise in the West-Indies, from viscid food, obstructed perspiration, and the oppressive heat of the sun.

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In Vertigo, Lethargy, Catarrh, and all disorders of the head, from obstruction in the capillaries, long experience has proved it to be a powerful medicine; and in certain cases of Apoplexy, it has been found serviceable even when given in Glysters,* where it has not been convenient to convey its effects by the stomach.

In the West-Indies, where the different species of head-ach, such as cephalæa, hemicrania, and clavus, are more frequent, and more violent than in Europe, Coffee is the only
medicine

* *Hist. de l'Acad. de Sciences,*

medicine that gives relief. Opiates are sometimes used, but Coffee has an advantage that opium does not possess; it may be taken in all conditions of the stomach; and at all times by women, who are most subject to these complaints; as it dissipates those congestions and obstructions, that are frequently the cause of the disease, and which opium is known to increase, when its temporary relief is past,

From the stimulant and detergent properties of Coffee, it is used in obstructions of the viscera; it powerfully promotes the menses, and mitigates the pains attendant on the
 sparing

sparing discharge of that evacuation. In the West-Indies, the chlorosis and obstructed menses, are common among laborious females, exposed to the effects of their own carelessness, and the rigorous transitions of the climate; here strong Coffee drank warm in a morning fasting, and good exercise after it, has been productive of enumerable cures.

The industrious Overseers of Plantations, and other Europeans employed in cultivation in the West-Indies, who are exposed to the morning and evening dews, find great support from a cup of Coffee, before they go into the field; it fortifies

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tifies the stomach, and guards them against the diseases incident to their way of life; especially in clearing of lands; or when their residence is in humid situations, or in the vicinity of stagnant water. Those who are imprudently addicted to intemperance, find Coffee a benign restorer, and bracer of the stomach, for that nausea, weakness, and disorderly condition, which is brought on by drinking bad fermented liquors, and new rum to excess.

Coffee having the admirable property of promoting perspiration,* it
allays

* *Lawenboek. Huxham.*

allays thirst and checks preternatural heat.

The great use of Coffee in France is supposed to have abated the prevalency of the gravel:—in the French Colonies, where Coffee is more used than with the English, as well as in Turkey, where it is the principal beverage, not only the gravel, but the gout, those tormentors of so many of the human race, are scarcely known.

It has been found useful in quieting the tickling vexatious cough, that often accompanies the small

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pox,

pox,* and other eruptive fevers.—A dish of strong Coffee without milk or sugar, taken frequently in the paroxysm of an asthma, abates the fit,† and I have often known it to remove the fit entirely. Sir John Floyer, who had been afflicted with the asthma from the seventeenth year of his age until he was upwards of fourscore, found no remedy in all his elaborate researches, until the latter part of his life, when he obtained it by Coffee.

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* *Huxham.*

† *Percival's Essays, Vol. I.*

Prepared with a great portion, or entirely with milk, instead of water, it is highly nutritious and balsamic; proper in hectic and pulmonic complaints, and is a great restorative to constitutions; emaciated by the gout and other chronic disorders.

Long watching and intense study are wonderfully supported by it, and without the ill consequences that succeed the suspension of rest and sleep, when the nervous influence has nothing to sustain it.

We are told that travellers in Eastern countries, and Messengers

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who are sent with dispatches, perform their tedious journeys by the alternate effects of Opium and Coffee;—and that the dervices and religious zealots, in their abstemious devotions, support their vigils, through their nocturnal ceremonies, by this panacea.

The celebrated *Doctor Harvey* used Coffee often; *Voltaire* almost lived on it; and the learned and sedentary of every country have recourse to it, as the best cordial to the brain.

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Among the many estimable qualities of Coffee, that of its being an antidote to the abuse of Opium, must not be considered as the least; for as mankind is not content with the wonderful efficacy derived from the prudent use of Opium, the abuse of it is productive of many evils, that are only remediable by Coffee.

It has never yet been sufficiently attended to, that Coffee, which has this power, must be capable of rendering the medicinal use of Opium more secure and advantageous. In military hospitals, recourse is often had to large, and repeated doses of
Opium;

Opium; from which I have frequently observed, that the retention of the stomach of the patient has been injured; the secretion of urine impeded, and his bladder affected with a paralysis; all these effects have been removed by Coffee.

In continued and remittent fevers in hot climates, it frequently happens, at the period when Bark is indicated, that the stomach cannot retain it;—this is an embarrassment of great importance, in which the practitioner has an interval, only of a few hours, to decide on his patient's fate;—Bark in substance is required
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to answer the intention, and here, as well as in many cases of intermittents, when every other mode of administering it has proved abortive, Coffee has been found an agreeable and successful vehicle.

A subject like Coffee, possessed of active principles and evident operations, must necessarily be capable of misapplication and abuse; and there must be particular habits which these operations disturb;—*Slare* says, he used it in too great excess, and it affected his nerves;* but *Dr. Fothergill*,
who

* *Slare*, having instanced himself, as one with whom Coffee did not agree, has misled many people;

who was of a very delicate habit,
and could not use Tea, drank Coffee

ple; and as this circumstance is sometimes quoted to justify objections against Coffee, I beg leave to relate his account of it in his own words: —
“Nor do I decry and condemn Coffee, though it proved very prejudicial to my own health, and brought paralytic affections upon me. I confess in my younger days, I ignorantly used it *in too great excess*; as many daily do make use of this, and other Indian drinks; though I have quite abandoned it for above thirty years, and soon recovered the good tone of my nerves, which continue steady to this day; yet I must own, Coffee to some people is of good use, when taken in just proportion, &c.” “It is true that they (Indian drinks) do not agree with all constitutions; with some, only one of these entertaining liquids, as Green Tea; and with others, all of them disagree.”—This candid relation of *Slare's*, requires no comment; but *excess* even of milk, given to children, whose natural food it is, produces the worst evils; an error often committed by nurses, and is said by *Hippocrates* to have destroyed many children.

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“almost constantly many years, without receiving any inconveniency from it.” †

But the history of particular cases, sometimes serves but to prove, that mankind are not all organized alike; and that the sympathy of one, and the antipathy of another, ought by no means to render useless, that infinite variety which pervades all nature; and with which the earth is blessed in the vegetable creation.—Were it so, physics would acquire but little aid from the toils of philosophy, when philo-

† *Letter to Ellis.*

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sophy had no other incitement to labour, than barren speculation.

Thus far the properties, and medicinal effects of Coffee, have been considered; the mode of preparing it differs in different countries, principally as to the additions made to it. The Eastern nations add either cloves, cinnamon, cardamoms, cummin seed, or essence of amber, &c. but neither milk nor sugar. Milk and sugar, without the aromatics, are generally used with it in Europe, America, and the West-India Islands, except when taken after dinner to promote digestion;—Then the custom of the French

French is commonly followed, and the milk is omitted.

It has long been a custom with many people among us, to add mustard to their Coffee;—mustard, or aromatics, may with great propriety be added, in flatulent, and languid constitutions; and particularly by invalids, and in such cases where warmth and stimulus is required.

The Turks make a delicate drink from the capsulas of the berries, which is cooling and refreshing; and used in summer time by people of fashion;—

this is called by the French *café a la sultane*.

The Turks, Arabians, Persians, and Egyptians, drink Coffee all day long; and what is prepared from three or four ounces, among them, is considered but a moderate quantity for one person in a day.—In the Dutch, French, and English colonies, it is the daily breakfast, and evening repast.

If a knowledge of the principles of Coffee, founded on examination, and various experiments, added to
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observations made on the extensive and indiscriminate use of it, cannot authorise us to attribute to it any particular circumstance unfriendly to the human frame :—if the unerring test of experience has confirmed its utility, in many countries, not exclusively productive of those inconveniences, habits, and diseases, for which its peculiar properties seem most applicable ;—let those properties be duly considered ; and let us reflect on the state of our Atmosphere ; the food, and modes of life of the inhabitants, so injurious to youth and beauty, filling the large towns and cities with
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chronical infirmities, and I think it will be evident what advantages will result from the general use of Coffee in England, as an article of diet, and to what purposes it may often be employed, as a safe and powerful medicine.

F I N I S.

